The Southern PATRIOT

Vol. 16. No. 3 Published by the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc. March, 1958

Florida City's Conscience Stirs

The conscience of St. Petersburg, Fla., is stirring over the deplorable conditions in the city's Negro slums.

The situation came to a head recently when a tenament house fire took the lives of two Negro children.

The Rev. Ben F. Wyland, president and executive secretary of the Florida Council for Racial Cooperation, stepped forward and began to crystallize public opinion for action.

"The years of talk about correcting conditions has produced no action," he said.

Wyland, an SCEF board member, organized a motor cavalcade through the slum areas to show the community's civic leaders how some of the Negro people are forced to live. About 25 cars made the trip. Included were representatives of the American Association of University Women, St. Petersburg Council of United Church Women, the Quaker Church, First Congregational Social Action Committee, Trinity

(Continued on page 4)

Plans Shape Up For Vote Meet

(By Staff Correspondent)

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Arrangements are being completed for the Conference on Voting Restrictions to be held here Sunday, April 27.

The Committee on Local Arrangements, headed by Dr. Francis A. Gregory, Assistant Superintendent of the Washington schools, announced after a meeting in February that the conference would be at the Asbury Methodist Church, 11th and K Sts. N. W., beginning at 2:30 p.m. The committee expects an overflow crowd to attend, including delegations from all the Southern states.

The conference will feature seven or eight noted Southerners giving their "Report from the South." They will detail how authorities deprive citizens of registration and voting rights. Government officials concerned with such violations will be asked to attend.

Chairman of the conference, which is being coordinated by the Southern Conference Educational Fund, is Bishop Edgar A. Love of the Baltimore area of the Methodist Church.

In addition to Dr. Gregory, officers of the Committee on Local Arrangements are: Vice-chairman, Mrs. A. J. E. Davis, Arlington, Va.; secretary-treasurer, Mrs. Selma W. Samols, Washington; and assistant secretary-treasurer, Mrs. Muriel M. Alexander, Washington.

Dr. Gregory's committee also plans to have a prominent government official address the Conference before the reports are made. A noted Washington citizen will be asked to sum up.

Guest speakers, as well as the reporters from the South, will be announced in the next issue of *The Patriot*.

Members of the Speakers Committee appointed by Dr. Gregory are Perry W. Howard, the Hon. James A. Cobb, George E. C. Hayes, and Aubrey W. Williams, president of SCEF. Dr. Gregory and Bishop Love are on the committee by virtue of office.

The Publicity Committee is headed by Dr. C. Herbert Marshall. He and Dr. Gregory have appointed to this committee Robert L. Taylor, Mrs. Betty Lindley, Mrs. Alice A. Dunnigan, Mrs. Ethel

(Continued on page 3)

—Independent Photo by Bill Hill

The Rev. Ben F. Wyland (pointing in foreground) shows St. Petersburg civic leaders the slums in which many of the city's Negroes are forced to live.

Points for Progress

The Sturgis, Ky., high school basketball team is doing much better this year—thanks to desegregation.

Star player is Nathaniel Dixon, Negro senior. He's one of 16 Negroes enrolled in the school this year; three of the others are substitutes on the basketball team.

Dixon has been high-point man in a number of the school's crucial games this year.

Eighteen months ago, when Negroes first tried to enroll at Sturgis, white students boycotted the school and mobs of adults demonstrated in front of the building. Now at the close of basketball games, Dixon's white teammates and classmates rush over to congratulate him. Said one mother of a white basketball player:

"That Dixon boy is all my son can talk about. He says he's the best player on the team."

After the "Trial By Fury"

Nashville, Quiet Now, Awaits Future Uncertainly

By HERMAN H. LONG

(The writer of the following article is one of the nation's recognized experts on race relations. He is director of the Race Relations Department, Board of Home Missions, Congregational Christian Churches, Fisk University, Nashville, and is a vice-president of SCEF.)

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—It is a little difficult for me to tell about Nashville and its efforts to desegregate the public schools last September. I have mixed feelings about what happened—pride and gratitude mingled with uncertainty.

I am proud of the forthright leadership of public school and police officials in meeting the threat of violence and anarchy which the segregationists fomented. And yet I am dismayed that violence did occur in my own community; that the human and physical damage was not prevented. Like many others in Nashville, I hoped for and expected better. The chances were good that Nashville could take this "giant step" forward with the courage and sureness of Louisville the year before.

Now, six months later, with the heat of those desperate September days gone, one encouraging fact remains: Nashville is now operating a partially desegregated public school system for the first time in its history. Official policies of the Nashville School Board and a federal court order help make this development a point of departure for the future.

The "Nashville Plan" called for desegregation at the first grade level during the 1957-58 school term. School zones were determined on the basis of a scholastic census, without reference to race, and students of the first grade were permitted to attend the school falling within their residence zones. Transfers were allowed when "good cause" could be shown, including cases where white and colored students would be required to attend previously all-white or all-Negro schools.

It went no farther. Its tone was limited, cautious, tentative. It made no commitment to a plan of complete desegregation at all grade levels. Accordingly, the Federal Court accepted the proposal only as a measure of good faith and ordered the school board to present by December 31, 1957, a complete plan for abolishing segregation at all grade levels.

An appeal was made for community support when this policy was announced in March, 1957. The Nashville Community Relations Conference and the *Nashville Tennessean* responded, as did others. The school superintendent and his staff did a yeoman's job of interpretation to parent groups and the community-at-large.

Segregationists protested loudly. Their most consistent voices were the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Government and its later offspring, the Parent's Preference Committee. They claimed that the 1957 state law permitting "voluntary segregation" has precedence over the federal court order.

John Kasper came to town in August, keeping an earlier promise to make Nashville the new beach head for the segregationists. The city received an avalanche of defamatory racial propaganda. Pro-segregationist rallies were held, crosses were burned, and threats to parents and school board members were made. Unauthorized meetings were held, even on school grounds, in violation of city ordinances.

The Blind Lead

From Miami, Fla., a 12-year-old blind girl, Leah Russell, recently wrote to President Eisenhower:

"If I were the President, I would have all of the children blindfolded and send them to school. I would also blindfold the colored children and send them to school, too. I think they would have a lot of fun together, and there wouldn't be any fights.

"Probably, after they got to know each other, there wouldn't be any more fights or anything like that."

By late August the school board wavered and took a backward step. It went in court asking whether the new state law permitting voluntary segregation could be applied. Only about a week before school opened the Federal District Judge held that the new state law was unconstitutional. But, meanwhile, the segregationists had gained important psychological and tactical ground.

School opened in September in an atmosphere of uncertainty and amid the clamor of a mobilized crew of segregationists. Of the 132 Negro children eligible to attend previously all-white schools, only 13 survived the pressures. Six schools were involved: Fehr, Clemons, Jones, Buena Vista, Glenn and Hattie Cotton. Small crowds of jeering segregationists gathered at these schools.

Tension mounted and by nightfall on Monday these crowds had become angry bottle-throwing mobs. Special details of police rushed to the scene and dispersed them. A few arrests were made. And then, shortly before 1:00 a. m. on Tuesday, the Hattie Cotton school was dynamited. A solitary Negro child was to have been in attendance the next day.

The shock of this irresponsible act stirred the city to serious action. Street approaches to the schools were blocked off, and crowds were prevented from forming. Police measures became firm and prompt. By the weekend 43 arrests had been made, including John Kasper.

And most importantly, a federal court injunction was issued restraining specified segregation leaders from interfering with the process of school desegregation. Order was restored and school attendance approached normal. Nashville was over the hump in its "trial by fury."

Nashville is quiet and settled now—even the newly integrated schools. But uncertainty remains about the next steps. The school board is less sure now about where it intends to go. In federal court hearings on January 28th, it asked the court to approve a plan of voluntary segregation which would involve a polling of parents' choices for their children as between integrated and segregated schools in their districts. This is essentially the proposal of the major prosegregation groups which have actively opposed any form of public school integration for Nashville and the State of Tennessee.

It was encouraging to us here in Nashville when the judge rejected this plan and told the school board to present to the court by April 7 a "substantial" plan for school desegregation covering all grade levels and geared to the spirit of "deliberate speed."

The standard of "good faith" implementation of the United States Supreme Court decision of 1954 hangs in abeyance. And Nashville is waiting again.

In Richmond, Va., a three-member Federal Court panel ruled in a split decision that Virginia's anti-NAACP laws are unconstitutional.

News-Round-up

Texan Attacks NAACP Law

The recently-enacted Texas law aimed at crippling the NAACP has been attacked by a former Secretary of State of that state.

Tom Reavley told a Texas Press Association convention:

"Where was our sense of fairness? Where was our courage? We should have heard an outcry against House Bill 5 all over Texas. Is it that we find injustice palatable and insignificant according to whom it hurts? If so, then watch out race relations. And watch out democarcy . . . ."

* * * *

The U. S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals has upheld the right of a Negro couple, Mr. and Mrs. Carl L. Baldwin, to challenge segregated seating in the Birmingham bus terminal.

* * * *

In Greeneville, S. C., an all-white jury convicted four Ku Klux Klansmen in the beating of an aged Negro man. The four received prison sentences ranging from one to six years.

* * * *

New Orleans Negro school children are boycotting the children's concerts of the city's Symphony Orchestra because of a ruling of the School Board that the custom of having Negro children sing or play instruments with the accompaniment of the orchestra was being abandoned. The boycott is being led by Parent-Teacher Associations throughout the city. At one scheduled concert, only three children and one lone teacher showed up.

Golden Burned Out

The office-home of Harry Golden, courageous editor of the Carolina Israelite, Charlotte, N. C., was burned out in February. Golden reported that the "work of a lifetime" was destroyed: all his files and his library —and the mailing list of the Israelite.

The Patriot urges its readers who are Israelite subscribers to send Golden their names immediately—along with subscription expiration date and renewal. See if you can also get names of other subscribers—and find some new ones. Golden's is one of the clear voices for decency in the South; help him rebuild.

—Photo Courtesy Louisiana Weekly

IT DIDN'T WORK—Despite campaign techniques like this billboard, plus numerous TV appearances and a rash of four-page newspaper ads, Leonard W. Gunzburg drew only 2,898 votes for mayor in the recent New Orleans primary; total votes cast: 167,000. Gunzburg, the only one of six candidates for the office to run on a race-hate platform, boasted he spent $50,000 in his campaign; that means his votes cost him $17 a throw. Gunzburg is a jewelry shop operator. The New Orleans Anti-Defamation League hastened to correct a false report that he is Jewish; Gunzburg claims to be a Catholic, but Catholics in New Orleans were also disowning him.

In the same election, Attorney Earl J. Amadee, the only Negro running, drew 19,409 votes for Councilman-at-Large; he ran fifth in a field of eight candidates. His total compares with 18,635 votes which he received in New Orleans two years ago when he ran for Attorney-General.

Plans Shape Up For Vote Conference

(Continued from page 1)

Payne, Marvin H. Caplan, the Rev. James D. Foy, the Rev. Dr. Smallwood E. Williams, and Anne and Carl Braden. Mr. Foy is pastor of the church where the conference will be held.

Chairmen of the Attendance Committee are Mrs. Alexander and Dean Charles H. Thompson of Howard University. Those appointed to this committee include William D. Nixon, Dr. Marcus I. Goldman, Mrs. Davis, Anne and Abe Bloom, Julius Weisser, Mrs. Arline Hays, Lynwood Cundiff, and Mrs. Adele Smith.

Hubert Leckie was named chairman of the Art and Decorations Committee. This committee will take care of decorating the church for the Conference and will also assist in laying out the program.

Dr. Walter E. Hager, Bethesda, Md. is chairman of the Youth Committee, which will make a special effort to get young people to the Conference. Members of this committee are being selected.

Mrs. Alice C. Trigg was named to the Housing Committee, but a chairman for this committee has not been selected. This committee will arrange housing for out-of-town delegates, who will be asked to stay over till Monday, April 28, in order to visit their Senators and Representatives.

The next meeting of the Committee on Local Arrangements will be at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 18, at Asbury Methodist Church. Dr. Gregory urged all interested persons to attend. Anyone who wishes to help but cannot attend this meeting should get in touch with Dr. Gregory, 4015 Massachusetts Ave., S. E., or with the secretary, Mrs. Samols, at 950 Mississippi Ave., S.E.

The Hotel and Restaurant Division of the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce has adopted a resolution calling for non-discriminatory practices in all public eating places. Many restaurants in the Wilmington area have already opened their doors to customers of all races and report that the policy is working well.